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29 July

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NSC BRIEFING

27 July 1954

BACKGROUND - TUNISIA

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I. Historical:

- A. Tunisian Protectorate imposed by France under treaties of Le Bardo and La Marsa 1881 and 1883.

B.

- C. Traditional ruler is Bey, succession by dynastical seniority. Current Bey, Sidi el-Amine, has ruled since 1943, when French General Giraud ousted predecessor for collaboration with Germans.

- D. Present population some 3 1/2 million, of which 250 thousand of European descent (most latter considered French citizens).

II. Nationalism:

- A. Post World War I development. Dominant party is Neo-Destour formed mid-1930s as offshoot of Destour (Constitution) party.

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B. Considerable impetus during and after World War II.

Strongly repressed after March 1952 for objections to French "reform" program.

C. Outstanding Nationalist leader is Habib Bourguiba, essentially moderate.

1. Imprisonment (January 1952) and subsequent exile resulted demonstrations forcibly repressed by authorities.

2. Bourguiba transferred Paris in mid-July 1954, presumably for discussions with Mendes-France.

III. Nationalist Program:

A. Demand parliamentary self-government, universal suffrage.

B. Willing for France to conduct foreign affairs, maintain military establishment for external defense.

C. Object to French settler minority's weighted participation with Moslem majority in government--term this co-sovereignty.

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D. Actively seeking support in Arab-Asian countries:

1. For backing in UN.
2. For financial and possibly military aid.

E. Nationalists probably maintain liaison with fellagha, but unlikely they control or have much direction of fellagha activities.

IV. Current Disorders:

A. Stem from crisis caused [REDACTED] (March 1952) when Resident General (Count Jean de Hautecloque) disregarded caution urged by Foreign Office, refused to negotiate with Bey's cabinet and had Tunisian cabinet members jailed. Subsequent violence subdued by force.

25X6

B. Hautecloque unsuccessfully tried to push "reforms" through. Bey took unprecedented stand in opposition. Finally capitulated December 1952, under threat dethronement, and signed "reform" measures.

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- C. Hautescloque conducted "holding operation" until replaced as Resident General (September 1953) by Pierre Voizard.
- D. Voizard consulted with prominent moderate nationalists (but not Bourguiba) and certain other political figures, then acted:
 - 1. Released most political prisoners.
 - 2. Created new cabinet (March 1953) with enlarged Tunisian representation to implement "reforms".
- E. "Reform" program met opposition from both nationalists and French settlers.
- F. Cabinet resigned en masse May 1954, but held office until 3 July. Resignation due:
 - 1. Unwillingness face universal criticism, terrorist intimidation.
 - 2. Fellagha successes.

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